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Kelli Michelle Cothran
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**The Thesis Committee for Kelli Michelle Cothran
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following Thesis:**

**Consumer Self-Congruency with Retail Event Sponsors and Shopping
Malls: The Role of Gender**

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Angeline Close Scheinbaum, Supervisor

Natalie Brown Devlin

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Malls: The Role of Gender**

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Kelli Michelle Cothran

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my family. Most importantly, my Mom and Dad who have believed in me relentlessly and loved me unconditionally. Everything I do is to make them proud. My older brother and first friend Lee. My aunts and uncles, Mary Jo and Gerald Thompson, Trisha, Bill, and Keith Bain and my beautiful grandparents who were the hardest working and most loving people I was blessed to know, Lavon and Brad Cothran, Shirley and Ruel Bain.

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Abstract

Consumer Self-Congruency with Retail Event Sponsors and Shopping Malls: The Role of Gender

Kelli Michelle Cothran, MA

The University of Texas at Austin, 2019

Supervisor: Angeline Close Scheinbaum

As event sponsorships are planned and assets are assessed for optimal consumer engagement, brands seek insight into the key indicators of consumer perceptions and attitudes towards curated events in order to increase purchase intention. This research explores the role of event sponsorship through the lens of gender perception to help understand variations in self-congruity. Over the course of three-days, attendees ($N = 532$) completed surveys at a sponsored event (a retail sponsor of a mall fashion show) in order to gain consumers' feedback on the sponsored event. The data provides indicators to assess gender variations in regards to the event itself, the retailer sponsoring the event, and the mall where the event took place. The self-congruity theory serves as the foundation for this thesis and hypotheses were formed based on the likelihood that gender discrepancies in self-image congruity will affect the attitude toward a sponsored event.

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Chapter I: Introduction

As the attention of our audiences becomes more obsolete, the increase in engagement and experiential experience planning becomes a key into marketing products to consumers. According to IEG (2019) sponsorship spending is expected to reach \$2.23 billion in 2019, giving marketers the opportunity to focus on developing sponsored events that engage the proper consumers.

Gender differences in marketing and advertising perceptions have been researched in order to connect a brand to stereotypes associated with gender roles (Eisend, 2010). These findings have led advertisers to portray brands images in correlation with gender roles in order to gain traction in the market share (Ndubisi, 2006). When marketers pursue sponsorship at events in order to increase awareness, build brand loyalty, or increase purchase intention it is important to understand the areas of the sponsorship deliverables, and the event fulfillment that consumers will attach value to the brand before, during, and post-activation. As consumers search for authenticity in relevant and genuine experiences (Manthiou, Kang, Hyun, & Fu, 2018) brands have the keen possibility to generate revenue and value through sponsored events. As new products and assets begin to enter the market readily available to consumers at an evolutionary pace, companies begin to face a need for alternative and engaging approaches to marketing beyond the point of sale system and organic purchase intent (Pralhalad, Ramaswamy, & Venkatram, 2000). Events and sponsorships present a unique opportunity for companies to integrate products into consumer's lifestyles through curated specialty content. By understanding the role of gender in a more in depth review at sponsored events, marketers and companies can begin to reach their ideal target in a more curated fashion and gain traction in the market through specialty content. In the process of fulfillment for

an event, a retailer may wish to begin a sponsorship with smaller bundled assets that then lead to optimum sales intentions from consumer purchases. In order to understand the range of value for a sponsorship during an event, it is important to recognize the end-consumer's overall perception of the event and the factors that lead them to attend initially. When is consumer attendance at a sponsored event purposeful and when does serendipity factor in favor of the event, specifically for the sponsor? Gender variances in viewing the sponsored content could possibly lead to further development of sponsors understanding their market and integrating the brand into the lifestyle of customers in potentially positive manners. Companies are faced with deciding how to measure, design, and produce intangible value of their events for consumers (Steiner and Harmon, 2009). By integrating events into a consumers daily lifestyle, i.e., a shopping trip to the mall, companies can build intangible value into their brand image through self-congruity (Kin, Lee, Ulgado, 2005).

Recognizing the merit of creating events with consumer's self-congruity toward the brand and activation is essential to the foundation of building experiential marketing opportunities for companies who are seeking measurable value while understanding the significance of intangible value by way of sponsorships (Scheinbaum, Lacey, Drumwright, 2019). From this study, we will examine the differences in men and women's perceptions of their role as consumers, specifically focusing on the consumer's part in relation to self-congruity measures during a sponsored event in order to better understand the variables of the self-congruity theory and event sponsorships as a piece of the marketing field.

PURPOSE

This study intends to help to get closer to fully understanding the concepts surrounding event sponsorships as a part of a mixed marketing plan, considering variances in gender perceptions that can lead to key insights to connect with men and women attending sponsored events. How can men and women view a sponsor at an event differently and what implications should marketers have when planning a sponsored event in order to gain self-congruity from the attendees to the brand sponsoring the event?

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the model of linking self-congruity with sponsorship events with attention to gender perceptions toward the event and experience factors in order to gain more understanding on positioning company assets in optimal places to garner the most customer retention and potentially long-term value from consumer purchase intention (Kim, Kim, & Kim, 2019). When connecting with a customer's emotions and identity, marketers have the opportunity to create effective measures to tap into brand loyalty and integrate sponsored events into a curated marketing mix targeting key consumers (Sciarrino, Friedman, Kirk, Kitchings, & Prudente, 2019). By assessing gender as a contributor to the self-congruity model based on event self-image and sponsorship, brands can better understand their target market and enhance the customer experience through event sponsorships in order to increase sales and intangible brand value to men and women in tailored formats that garner the most retention from each gender (Das, 2014).

As we examine the sponsoring brand image through the scope of gender, more indicators will help to form complete package sponsorship circumstances to better reach customers and better understand customer disposition to brands that garner repeat

purchases. By gathering research insights from this study, businesses can better fit their brand assets with sponsorship activities and reach the ideal audience with strong ties to a consumers self-congruity relationships with the products, and ultimately brands, that they allow into their lives on a daily basis. By integrating more understanding of personal attributes from the consumer, such as brand, environment, and enjoyment, companies can tailor-make sponsorships that reach consumers in a positive and impactful manor (Chua, Hyeon-Cheol, Sanghyeop, Heesup, 2018).

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

This thesis will be broken down into five chapters in order to recap the overall ideas and models related to event sponsorship and consumer involvement in creating brand value through consumer variances based on gender towards self-congruity. The first chapter will introduce the concepts and basis for the research as well as the intended contribution to the self-congruity theory. This will be followed by a literature review focusing on self-congruity with shopping malls, shopping retailers, event marketing, sponsored events, intangible value, and gender perceptions of sponsored event marketing with an outline of the developed hypotheses from the research findings in Chapter II. In Chapter III the methods for this study hypotheses will be addressed with Chapter IV analyzing the data from both men and women perspectives from the study findings. Chapter V will conclude the study findings by discussing the implications as well as present limitations and objectives for future researchers.

Chapter II: Theory, Literature Review, Hypotheses

This chapter highlights previous research studies focusing primarily self-congruity theory and sponsored event marketing as a promotional tool for companies and company products. The featured studies lead to the overall hypotheses for this study with regards to sponsorship and the perception of sponsors in various environments with regards to gender for this particular research. In order to frame our study's research Branded Marketing Events (BMEs) (Altschwager, Conduit, Bouzdine-Chameeva, & Goodman, 2016), intangible brand value, and event marketing experiences are analyzed in order to showcase the added value to companies through event sponsorship. The self-congruity theory will be the main framework focus and the hypotheses will be based around the self-congruity theory.

SELF-CONGRUITY THEORY

The self-congruity theory (Sirgy, 1986), explores the relationship between behavior and purchases based on a product image that the user finds in-line with their own self-concept. Consumer beliefs and self-image then fall in line with purchases and motivates behaviors that fall under a consumer's concept of self. According to Sirgy and Tidwell (2008), self-congruity with a product leads ultimately to an increase in consumer perception about a brand, heightening levels of consumer brand loyalty, attitude, preference, and purchase intention. The effect of self-congruity with sponsorship on brand loyalty builds a strong model to base event activation features to enhance the overall consumer experience in order to gain maximum brand loyalty from factors such as customer involvement, self-congruity with sponsored events, and customer awareness as variables (Sirgy and Tidwell, 2008).

While event sponsorships continue to include more insights from consumers at events, it is important for brands to carefully consider the event in which they are attaching their assets to in order to gain the most from the investment of sponsorship (Bascaia and Rocha, 2018). This is essential to understanding the importance of self-congruity as a factor to consider when reaching the correct audience in-line with proper event sponsor-fit.

When considering the variables that affect perceptions of a sponsor image Dees, Gay, Popp, & Jensen, (2018), examine the relationship between event image, event-sponsor-fit, event commercialization, sponsorship exposure, and activity involvement to moderate sponsor image. This study aims to clarify the understanding of drivers that measure the factors that are in relation to self-congruity at a sponsor event. Gender as a moderator has shown that positive store loyalty can be achieved for retailers by focusing more on retail brand personality over self-congruity for men and relying more on self-congruity for females. (Das, 2014). Das (2014), also explores the variables of retail brand personality and self-congruity as not substitutable, but complementary constructs, and acknowledging the five dimensions Das (2014) uses to scale retail brand personality (namely sophistication, empathy, dependability, authenticity, and vibrancy). These variables help to form the effect of retail brand personality and self-congruity with regards to gender variances. These previous research findings are important to the sponsorship literature as this study will aim to reinforce the self-congruity model with the integration of gender effects on positive sponsorship experience and added brand value from event marketing activities specifically towards self-congruity to the retailer and the shopping mall that the event took place at. In order to better understand the variables surrounding retailers and shopping malls, previous findings on self-congruity and gender

variances were gathered in order to better understand the landscape of the findings previously made for shopping malls, retailers, and shoppers.

SELF-CONGRUITY & RETAILERS

Retailers in research literature span varying concepts such as the fashion products being manufactured and sold by the retailer, the environment of the retailer, the location of the retailer, retail staff, and retail self-image alignment with the ideal customer market. To better understand the variables being tested in this thesis, the idea of retailer is further explained through the following literature.

Casidy and Wymer (2016), examined retail purchases through a structural model testing the correlation between consumer satisfaction, loyalty, willingness-to-pay premium price, and the inclusion of risk to better develop the concept around factors leading to purchases. In their study Casidy and Wymer (2016), found that the role of loyalty towards products and services from a retailer, or company, can diminish in high social risk scenarios. This interesting implication to services and products is important to note for event sponsorships as consumers faced with social risk will likely diminish in loyalty, pushing retailers and services to focus more on satisfaction of the product over loyalty of the brand in the case that social risk are involved with the purchase (Casidy and Wymer, 2016).

When specifically targeting the concept of fashion self-congruity (FSC) the consumer concept is matched with a fashion style (Anand and Kaur, 2018). Anand and Kaur (2018), develop an expanded model of self-congruity to enhance the findings towards fashion in four distinct ways:

- (1) AFSC: the extent to which an individual perceives his/her fashion style to be a representation of attributes that he/she believes he/she actually possesses;

- (2) IFSC: the extent to which an individual perceives his/her fashion style to be a representation of attributes that he/she aspires to possess;
 - (3) SFSC: the extent to which an individual perceives his/her fashion style to be consistent with what others think of him/her; and
 - (4) ISFSC: the extent to which an individual perceives his/her fashion style to be a reflection of an image he/she aspires others to have of him/her.
- (Anand and Kaur, 2018).

The measures found in the scales of (Anand and Kaur, 2018), are insights into recognizing the integration that the fashion industry has on self-image and self-concept. By addressing these variables through the FSC, can these items be applied to better understand variances in gender towards fashion style? In order to explore this more in event sponsorships and the role of fashion retailers, this literature is important to recognize in regards to shopper's motivations of purchase intention and understanding of the self-congruity links between fashion, retailer, event, and consumer.

Shopping malls and the retail stores located in the malls, each have inherited interest in creating positive and lasting experiences for their shoppers (Hedhli, Zourrig, Park, 2017). Hedhli, et al. (2017), developed a conceptual model designed around mall image (mall employees, mall atmosphere, mall design) , store image (stores' selection, stores' merchandise, stores' service's quality, stores' prices) with attention to self-congruity with shoppers as well as the image spill-over of the mall to the stores located in the mall. The findings from this literature suggest to marketers that since shoppers' self-congruity helps in facilitating corresponding images for the shopping mall, and the retail stores, opportunities to cue and increase shoppers' self-congruity through experiences,

ambiance, atmosphere, employees, design, and marketing programs can heighten shoppers' self-congruity experience (Hedhli et al., 2017).

GENDER & SELF-CONGRUITY AT SHOPPING MALLS

Considering shopping behaviors and the shopping experience with regards to gender and self-congruity, Hedhli, Zourrig, & Chebat (2016), examine the concept of shopping well-being as a measure of consumer shopping experience with variables of a marketing framework (value-satisfaction-loyalty) to test consumers relationships with their shopping experience. Hedhli et al. (2016) also uses gender as a moderating effect to focus on variations in shopping enjoyment and shopping wellness to understand utilitarian and hedonic value comparisons of men and women shoppers. In the study examined, no evidence was recorded in significant variances in shopper's self-congruency therefore leading to a pattern of applying similar shopping experiences for consumers regardless of gender and self-congruity levels (Hedhli et al., 2016). The implications from the Hedhli et al. (2016), study are important due to the suggestion that shopping malls specifically, should generate positive word-of-mouth communication and encourages retailers within the mall to offer entertainment opportunities in order to increase the shoppers well-being.

Mall managers can enhance shoppers' perceptions of hedonic value by recruiting retailers offering entertainment opportunities (e.g., movie theaters, play house, arcade) and scheduling regular and frequent entertainment events at large gathering places within the mall (e.g., small concerts, piano playing). (Hedhli et al., 2016).

This implication leads to an opportunity for shopping malls to enhance hedonic value through potential sponsorship events for retailers in the mall. In order to further support the concept of event marketing to increase consumer self-congruity towards shopping malls, Salem, Chebat, Michon, & Oliveira (2016), researched the theory of self-congruity with the variables of price, product, and service quality and how these affect mall loyalty through shopper's gender. In their findings, Salem et al. (2016), report that women shoppers self-congruity was influenced by mall employees while men shoppers showed no significance in self-congruity toward the mall employees, females also perceived mall loyalty by means of product quality compared to men who perceived mall loyalty to price perception, their findings showcase significant variance in mall loyalty across genders (Salem et al., 2016). The implications from the gender variances in perceived mall loyalty for different constructs can help mold better sponsor-fit and event design to gain the most quality content from the event to the target consumer.

SPONSORSHIP CONTEXT

The literature shows that sponsorship, more narrowly event sponsorships, are pursuing consumers' perspectives of the sponsor-fit between parties associated with a

particular event. The consumers view towards the sponsor and event fit link to variables such as location, design, and measures on providing joy to a customer through the overall experience (Bruhn and Holzer, 2015). By creating these experiential marketing events by way of sponsors with the correct sponsor-fit in place, optimum sales and purchase intentions are expected to occur (Koo and Lee, 2019). In order to increase consumers value of the sponsor, it is important for the role of the activation at the event to be relevant and an act of benevolence in order to convey a strong sponsor-fit (Scheinbaum et al., 2019).

When considering the formula for the ideal sponsorship and event marketing experience for consumers, companies need a deeper understanding of how consumers will perceive the sponsor image in relation to achieving the marketing goals from the event. Grohs and Reisinger (2014), present a model based on the ideas of positive event image, positive sponsor-fit, and negative event commercialization in order to increase perceived sponsor image from the exposure and activity involvement. These key findings frame the concept of incorporating co-creation into the activity involvement at a sponsor's activation and the view of gender variations with regards to event sponsor-fit in order to retain positive intangible brand value.

Mazodier and Merunka (2011), developed a relationship between sponsor event fit and the influence on consumer responses to sponsorship through self-congruity with the event, as well as a strong effect on brand trust created through sponsorship activations. Their findings provided key insights into the factors of brand trust and brand loyalty increasing as a result of sponsorship events and the importance of self-congruity between the consumer and the event (Mazodier and Merunka, 2011).

When connecting sponsor-fit and the design of the event, it is researched by Olson, (2010), to better understand the overall sponsorship context and the significance of the sponsorship in different environments with different variables. Olson's (2010), findings support that one model can work well in cultural contexts with high levels of sponsor-fit. Measures such as sponsor attitude, object attitude, sponsor involvement, and object involvement led to significant levels of sincerity, sponsorship attitude, object equity, and overall sponsor equity in the study (Olson, 2010). These findings are important in the literature findings due to the correlation in multiple variables leading to significant results of sponsor equity. By better understanding and developing further research on key findings about the audience involvement levels and attitude before the sponsorship takes place to more intentionally place objects associated with the sponsor-fit and event correlation to the key target consumers. In researching self-congruity with regards to gender perceptions towards an event, the previous findings on brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand image, and attitude toward the brand can help develop the findings from this research in order to understand consumer value placed on brands at event sponsorships.

CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT AT SPONSORED EVENTS

Investigating BMEs (Branded Marketing Events) dives into the ideology that providing events that initiate interactions with consumers can be highly beneficial to a brand's identity (Altschwager et al., 2016). When creating event activations, brand and marketing teams are expected to engage the audience in order to crossover the value of the experience to the consumer, ultimately leading the spectators, or those involved at the event to brand loyalty (Essamri, Mckechnie, & Winklhofer, 2019).

Engagement touch-points have been studied in the past on consumer experience and this aspect in generating brand value through the customer (Sneath, Finney, & Close, 2006). The philosophy and concepts, such as cognitive, emotional, sensorial, pragmatic, and relational experiences that are measured under BMEs (Altschwager et al., 2016) are important to recognize when a company is creating an event sponsorship that seamlessly aligns with the experience of the customer. This can make the event feel serendipitous in nature and capitalize on consumer behavior towards the company instead of feeling subjected to marketing tactics through sponsorship (Sneath et al., 2006).

Events drive a key force for sponsors to profit from characteristics that help form intangible value (Mahadevan and Ren, 2019). These characteristics can range in format but more formally can be measured by a range of brand qualities such as: functional value, emotional value, social value, and economic value (Steiner and Harmon, 2009). Intangible value becomes one of the greatest assets for a company because the formula for a particular brand's measure of intangible value cannot be replicated (Cova and Paraque, 2018). It is curated carefully and meticulously in order to engage consumers beyond tangible products and deeper into the psychology of consumer behavior towards a brand's engagement with its customers (Itani, Kassab, & Loureiro, 2019).

When referring to the brand power of companies like Starbucks, Mercedes or Nike it is debatable to know if the product and service are the key identifiers of brand value or if the customer generates the conceptual idea of the brand, thus providing deeper intangible brand value (Steiner and Harmon, 2009). Breaking down intangibles further for a brand, Steiner and Harmon also point out three main ideas that lead to an increased brand value: knowledge, experience, and emotion. When measuring these through the lens of experiential marketing activations, we can marginalize the opportunities for

companies to understand their target market on a level which increases the livelihood of generating brand awareness, loyalty, and advocacy (Yuan, 2019). Once we understand the targeted consumer's feelings and understandings towards a brand we can optimize the experience in order to gain intangible value (Weigand, 2009).

GENDER VARIATIONS IN EVENT SPONSORSHIPS

There are few literary findings, that were found, to apply to gender perceptions of sponsored event marketing. From what has been researched in regards to gender variances, we can recall that women tend to lean more positively towards supporting brands that have more altruistic purposes for sponsorship while both men and women did have strong brand recognition and recall for sponsors of the event. (McDaniel and Kinney, 1998).

Another important factor to recognize in the literature is the adoption of sponsorships as a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) motivator for grass-root events that tend to focus on women's likelihood to favor a brand that ties to the demand for corporate responsibility and transparency (Pegoraro, O'Reilly, & Levallet, 2008). While the focus lies in corporate responsibilities to promote social wellness, it also highlights women as the main consumer decision maker, therefore, marking a significant difference in women and men and their views on sponsorships and brand affiliation at various events (Zhu, Teng, Foti, & Yuan, 2019).

For the purpose of this study, we will focus solely on offline behaviors of consumers shopping intent with regards to their identified gender. In the past researchers have linked store environment with more positive consumer experiences leading to impulsive buying behaviors (Mattilaa and Wirtz, 2001). Can we transfer this idea into event sponsorships leading to consumer purchasing power and brand loyalty? Davis,

Lang, & Diego (2013), have found that women tend to approach shopping in a more hedonic way offline. This presents an opportunity for retailers to engage with women in order to increase brick-and-mortar store sales through sponsored events profiting from creating enjoyment of being engaged with a brand away from the mundane shopping experience. It has also been found that there is a strong effect on men and women perceptions of their gender when purchasing products specifically offline (Davis et. al, 2013), increasing the likelihood for companies to factor in opportunities for products to be purchased depending on a category targeted to gender specifics. By creating events through sponsorship, retailers have the advantage to interact with these gender roles and shopping behaviors in order to maximize sales in the tactile retail space.

When considering consumer-based brand equity (CBBE), gender has been referenced by variables associated with consumer brand engagement (CBE) and brand love (BL) (Machado,Vacas-De-Carvalho, Azar, André, & Santos, 2018). By encompassing these ideas from Machado et al. (2018), with attention to gender, sponsors can increase brand value and give consumers the ability to feel self-congruent towards their experience at a sponsored activation. With gender perceptions continuing to evolve and sharp lines around masculine and feminine brand identities blur, products can move beyond the traditionally assigned gender consumption role and begin to become ubiquitous and enduring across gender (Avery, 2012).

HYPOTHESES

From the previous literature this study was developed to include research in a theory based approach to further explain the relationship consumers have with retail event sponsors and the shopping mall that they attended the event at through the lens of gender roles towards consumer self-congruity. Predominantly, this study focuses on the

differences in gender views and recognition of retail event sponsors and if men and women feel self-congruent towards the shopping mall and retail event sponsor involved with the event. Can a retail event sponsor generate increased self-congruity for the consumer by capitalizing on gender perceptions as contributors at an event?

In order to fully execute the foundation of this study, background research was conducted to find articles focused on consumer's self-congruity as a part of an actively engaged audience at experiential marketing events with a sponsor, as well as the essence of measuring self-congruity, specifically towards the retailer and the mall hosting the event.

The model we used is rooted in the self-congruity theory focusing on the factors that lead to an increase in overall brand value, we will narrow down this focus to brand value with regards to gender. We will then breakdown the research, meanings, and findings and how these can be used to further understand event sponsorships as a part of advertising, brands, and product management. This will lead us to the limitations and future research suggestions.

Past research (Close and Krishen, 2009) has focused on a consumer's self-congruity with an event; but there is a gap remaining that needs to focus on the self-congruity with a retail event sponsor and shopping mall (environment). From our literature review findings, we believe that highly involved customers who feel connected to an event are more likely to enjoy the sponsored content. We also believe that as customers feel more self-congruity with the environment hosting the event, in our study being a shopping mall, as well as more self-congruity with the event sponsor and activity being showcased, the more value from the event will be gained. In order to better understand self-congruity in relation to gender, this study will aim to focus primarily on

gender perceptions and variations of gender self-congruity at sponsored fashion shows taking place in a shopping mall. Based on the previous self-congruity findings, the following hypothesis were formed around women and men's self-congruity towards the retail sponsor of the event he/she is attending and the shopping mall hosting the event:

H1: Consumers, regardless of gender, are self-congruent with retailers that sponsor events they attend.

H2: Consumers, regardless of gender, are self-congruent with shopping malls.

TABLE 1 Selective Research Considering Self-Congruity and Consumer-Level Outcomes								
Research	Context	Study Design	Self-Congruency Theory	Consumer-Level Variables	Integration of Sponsor?	Consumer Gender Aspect?	Event Marketing Measured?	Event Activity Affects?
Siry, Grewal, and Mangleburg (2000)	Self Congruity	Integrative Model	- Self-Image Congruence in retailing - Product symbolic cues - Match between store image and consumers self-concept.	- Store attitude, store preference, store selection, satisfaction with a store, store loyalty. - Retail environment - Retail patron image	No	No	No	No
Siry and Tidwell (2008)	Sponsorship on Brand Loyalty	Experimental	-Self-congruity with sponsored event - Image of the sponsored event matches consumer self-image. - Consumers experience self-congruity with an event sponsored by a brand they are loyal to.	- Customers involved with the sponsored event are more likely to spend more time and energy for the event. - Effect of self-congruity on brand loyalty -Moderation effect of customer awareness.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Biscola and Rocha (2018)	Sponsorship Effectiveness	Experimental	-Awareness, congruence, attitudes, and purchase intentions of sponsors - Sponsors leveraging activities to explain their role in event success.	-Attitude toward brand - Perceived Congruence - Purchase Intention	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Santos and Franco (2019)	Congruence and Sponsorship Placement	Experimental	- Attention processes for 24 types of stimuli for different sports disciplines - Sponsors placed in the area of action receive more attention, regardless of congruence. - Sponsor-fit strategies for short-term actions.	- Eye tracking to measure effectiveness of sporting event posters - Viewer's attention as an indicator. - Congruence, number of sponsors, placement of advertisement.	Yes	No	No	No
Dees, et al. (2018)	Sponsorship Effectiveness	Experimental	- Sponsor physical asset brand recognition. - Activation on sponsorship effectiveness based on chosen assets.	- Controlled variables measured by gender, age, income. - Sponsored assets included physical branded boards with branded material. - Intangible Rights such as exclusive partner, official partner, and on site activation rights.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Shin and Perdue	Congruity Relationships in Events	Experimental	- Sponsor brand effects in a regional event. - Event visitors with high self-congruity have favorable attitudes toward the event. - High self-congruity with brand image influence brand loyalty and brand attitude.	- Self-congruity with sponsoring brand image - Self-congruity with event image. - Congruity between event and sponsoring brand image. - Event attitude - Sponsoring Brand Attitude. - Sponsoring Brand Loyalty.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Table 1: Select Research Considering Self-Congruity and Consumer Level Outcomes

Close and Krishen (2009)	Event Self-Congruity	Experimental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Event entertainment, persuasiveness and self-congruity leading to shopping likelihood. - Effect on shopping time and event entertainment. - Knowledge about the sponsor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Event self-congruity, entertainment, persuasiveness and purchase intention likelihood. 	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
The Current Research	Self Congruity at Event Sponsorship Activations	Experimental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Field study of 532 fashion show attendees - 21 Sponsored Fashion Shows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-Congruency with Retailer Macy's. - Self- Congruency with event venue, Mail. - Consumer Shopping Enjoyment. 	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 1 Cont.: Select Research Considering Self-Congruity and Consumer Level Outcomes

Chapter III: Methods

This chapter will focus on the fieldwork and design of the study research methods used to assess the data collected. The goal of these methods is to further develop the relationship between consumers at events and the opportunities for sponsors to engage with consumers in order to contribute to the self-congruity theory in relation to retail event sponsors and shopping malls. The aim is to further discover more insights in shopping behavior and the retailer/mall relationship in congruence with men and women's perceptions of their self-congruity towards the retail sponsor of the event.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants for the study represent an international sample with 161 participants being from outside of the United States. This is potentially due to the high level of tourism in this area of Las Vegas. 68% of the participants were women with the average age being 38, the oldest 77, and the youngest 15. Men represented 32% of the participants with the average age also being 38, the oldest 75, and the youngest 19.

The most noted occupations for women were sales, education, and real estate and men reported the top three occupations as accounting, retirement, and also sales. Men reported having an average of 14.25 years of formal education while women reported 13.75. The average household income reported by women was \$108,910 and men reported an average of \$120,140.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND SAMPLING METHOD

This study was created to further develop the understanding of multiple variables associated with consumer self-congruity of retail sponsored events at a shopping mall.

The data collected is a quantitative study in a non-experimental design that tested a range of variables associated with the retail event sponsor, the environment, and customer experience in relation to self-congruity. In order to test a range of participants to find significant analyses, the sample was pulled from over three-days of fieldwork which provided an acceptable representation of the dependent variables, men and women.

SPONSORED EVENT CONTEXT

In conducting this research, the team employed a field study approach to gain consumer feedback via surveys. The study focuses on 21 sponsored fashion shows which took place over a weekend (Friday-Sunday) in a centrally located area at the Fashion Show Mall at Las Vegas. The chosen sponsor, Macy's, is an anchor store to the almost 2 million square-foot mall that houses 200 top tier brick-and-mortar stores, 7 anchors, fine dining restaurants, and a fashion show runway. The Fashion Show Mall encompasses art displays, a music lab partnership with Apple, restaurants that allow shoppers to people-watch on the Las Vegas strip, and New York style fashion show entertainment. The choice for this particular mall allowed for a wide range in sample demographics due to the high volume of tourist in the area.

The fashion show stage featured the sponsors' logo displayed conspicuously above and behind the runway and models were styled in Macy's latest merchandise. During each event Macy's was the sole sponsor of seven, 20-minute fashion shows over three-days, providing data from 21 total shows across a range of days, and times of day, as to encompass an unbiased set of consumer feedback. It can be noted as well that each fashion show exhibited the same step-and-repeat characteristics such as lighting, models, and music. Immediately following each of the 21 fashion shows the research field team conducted on-site opt in surveys.

Macy's department store retailer was chosen as the sole sponsor for this study. Macy's is a strong, recognizable, and trusted brand in the mall environment. As a cornerstone department store, getting its start 160 years ago, Macy's continues to use experiential marketing to attract consumers to its 680 brick-and-mortar stores in the United States. As an anchor store at The Fashion Show Mall, Macy's fit as the sponsor for the fashion show event make it the ideal candidate to gain further insights into consumer self-congruity with regards to Macy's sponsored event.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The survey was developed from a previous study focusing on consumer self-congruity toward the event in regards to event persuasiveness and shopping likelihood (Close and Krishen, 2009). The survey contained questions which were formulated to test various event variables with regards to the specific sponsored fashion shows over the three-day fieldwork. Participants were ask to complete the 61 questions on the survey immediately following the completion of the sponsored event. As an incentive to participate in the survey, discount booklets were distributed with coupons for various retailers, restaurants and entertainment venues located in the Fashion Show Mall. The retail sponsor for the event was included in the coupon booklet, however no mention of the specific coupon was brought to participant's attention and the booklets were obtained once the completed survey was returned. The complete survey used for this study is included in the Appendix.

MEASURES

All of the 61 questions featured on the survey used a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The variables being tested were

items surrounding the event, sponsorship, shopping enjoyment, shopping time, self-congruity and purchase intention. The gathered data surrounding variables that were not tested in this study can be examined in future research. There are two variables that will be the focus of this study.

The first variable measured is self-congruity towards the retail event sponsor, which gathers how participants see their self-image and identity in regards to the retailer (Casidy, et al., 2016). An example of the survey content measuring self-congruity retailer is “I am very much like the typical customer who shops at Macy’s.”

The second variable for this study is testing the measures of consumer self-congruity towards the shopping mall hosting the sponsored event (environment). The self-congruity mall measures were used to test the extent to which participants felt their idea of self related to the environment, and other consumers in the environment, of the sponsored event, a shopping mall (Hedhli, et al., 2017). Participants were ask items such as “I feel my personal profile is similar to the typical customer who shops at this mall.”

The items in this research were formatted by Close and Krishen (2009) and the research gathered from consumer self-congruity towards the retail event sponsor and self-congruity towards the shopping mall from this study survey measures were adapted from the self-congruity scale by Sirgy, Grewal, Mangleburg, and Park (1997). Reliability was determined using Cronbach’s alpha test which was found to be reliable for internal consistency with the alpha’s ranging from .83 to .90 for the scales.

Following the Likert scale questionnaire portion of the survey, participants were ask to complete information about their age, education level, income, occupation, country of origin and gender (man/woman). Table 2 represents the variables tested with the measures from the survey.

Variables	Survey Analysis
<i>Self-Congruity Retailer</i>	<p>I am very much like the typical customer who shops at Macy's.</p> <p>I can identify with the typical customer who shops at Macy's.</p>
<i>Self-Congruity Mall</i>	<p>I am not at all like the typical customers who shop at this mall.</p> <p>The image of the typical customer who shops at this mall is very dissimilar from the kind of person I am.</p> <p>I feel my personal profile is similar to the typical customer who shops at this mall.</p>

Table 2: Variables Tested with Survey Questions (Close et al., 2009).

Chapter IV: Findings

This chapter will investigate the findings from the consumer surveys completed by the pooled sample from the fashion show event. The data examined shows the relationship between gender and self-congruity towards the retail event sponsor and the mall. Consumer participant responses were measured on a seven-point Likert type-scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

RESEARCH ANALYSIS

An independent samples t-test was conducted to find variances in gender perceptions of self-congruity towards the retail event sponsor and the shopping mall. There were no outliers in the data, as assessed by inspection of a box plot. Self-congruity scores for each level of gender were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilks test ($p > .05$). Homogeneity of variances was violated, as assessed by Levene's Test for Equality of Variances ($p = .01$), therefore separate variances and the Welch-Satterthwaite correction were used.

The results show that there is a significant difference in congruity self retailer between men ($N = 166$), $M = 4.05$ ($SD = 1.74$) and women ($N=324$), $M = 4.00$, ($SD = 1.74$), $t = -.22$, $df = 338$, $p < .00$. 95% CI for mean difference 3.18 to 4.18. On average men reported to have higher self-congruity with the retail event sponsor.

The results of the t-test also show that there is a significant difference in congruity self mall between men ($N = 166$), $M = 4.18$ ($SD = 1.76$) and women ($N = 326$), $M = 3.90$, ($SD = 1.76$), $t = -1.46$, $df = 339$, $p < .01$. 95% CI for mean difference 4.19 to 4.51. Similarly, men on average also had higher levels of self-congruity towards the shopping mall. In Table 3 the findings are reported to show the means, standard deviations, and t-test findings.

Congruity Self Retailer	Gender						Sig. (2-tailed)	t	df
	Male			Female					
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n			
	4.05	1.74	166	4.00	1.74	327	.00*	-.22	338

Congruity Self Mall	Gender						Sig. (2-tailed)	t	df
	Male			Female					
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n			
	4.18	1.76	166	3.90	1.76	326	.01*	-1.46	339

$p < .05^*$

Table 3: T-test results and descriptive statistics for gender variances to dependent results.

HYPOTHESIS 1

Our first hypothesis suggested that gender self-congruity was equal towards the retail event sponsor of the event they attended. The independent t-test was conducted to examine whether there were significant variances in gender self-congruity to the retail event sponsor. The results showed a significant difference in that men reported a higher level of self-congruity towards the retail event sponsor ($t = -.22$, $df = 338$, $p < .00$). Thus, the hypothesis that both men and women are self-congruent with retailers that sponsor events they attend is not supported.

HYPOTHESIS 2

Our second hypothesis suggested that gender self-congruity was equal towards the shopping mall. The independent t-test was conducted to examine whether there were significant variances in gender self-congruity to the shopping mall. The results showed a significant difference in that men reported a higher level of self-congruity towards the shopping mall ($t = -1.46$, $df = 339$, $p < .01$) Thus, the hypothesis that both men and women are self-congruent with shopping malls is not supported.

Chapter V: Conclusion

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate the correlation between gender and self-congruity variations towards the dependent variables tested, the retail event sponsor and the shopping mall. The findings from the research provide insights that can be added to the understanding of the self-congruity theory, specifically at sponsored event activities intended to reach consumers attending these events in order to increase consumer self-congruity with the retail event sponsor. As retailers seek to attract more consumers into brick-and-mortar stores, they can benefit greatly from the understanding of self-congruity as a more in-depth term to empirically generate content that connects with ideal customers (Sirgy et al., 2000).

This can help in generating more fun, approachable content through events tailored to men and women who tie more tangible measures of purchase intention to events. It can also be retrieved from the data analysis that men seem to connect more with the typical customer of the retailer, giving them a positive measurement of self-congruity towards the retail store sponsoring the event. This high correlation between men and the retailer is important to the self-congruity model to factor in the relativity of considering men and women when planning sponsored events in order to gain the most audience and consumer attention in a positive and meaningful manner.

The present study examines the effect of gender towards the event location, the shopping mall, which shows that both men and women feel connected to the environment that the sponsored event is taking place at, however, statistically men report higher self-congruity with the shopping mall (environment). From our findings we can predict that men can have a more positive interaction to a location hosting an event if the location

matches their self-identity. This can enhance the benefits for sponsors with regards to both men and women when planning and implementing experiential marketing plans.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SELF-CONGRUITY THEORY

The findings of this study suggest that the self-congruity theory applies positively to consumer implications towards an event marketing activation and sponsor assets in the instance that the consumer has a positive self-image relationship to the event image, activity, and context (Sirgy, 1986). These factors also vary depending on gender views of the congruity relationship between the consumer's self image and positive correlations with the sponsor brand image and the environment hosting an event (Dees, et al., 2018). In order to reach an optimal number of potential consumers through events, the self-congruity theory can be expanded to integrate further variables in order to fully encompass consumer behavior and buying power as knowledgeable and active audiences.

The research findings support Hedhli, et al., (2017) findings in the concept that retail stores located in malls have inherited interest in their customers shopping engagement and the opportunity to create positive and lasting experiences for customers at the shopping mall. As a moderating factor, gender self-congruity differences can be used to apply more value, satisfaction, and loyalty (Hedhli et al., 2016), to retail event sponsors looking to apply heightened self-congruity to a marketing mix. By enhancing hedonic value through potential event sponsorships, retailers within the mall can increase self-congruity towards the shopping mall overall shopping well-being for customers (Salem et al., 2016).

In regards to gender, the findings from this study can help in a more complete picture of the audience and the interaction of the audience's self-congruity at specifically sponsored events with a retailer. The implications are worth noting since gender variances

were significant from the data in relation to self-congruity with the retail event sponsor and the shopping mall (environment).

IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETERS

In order to plan more encompassing events for consumers, marketers can better understand customers buying intentions and patterns based on self-congruity with sponsors and the events hosted in order to implement value for all parties involved in a sponsored event (Bruhn and Holzer, 2015). When considering messaging strategies and asset placement for a sponsor, marketers can assess the implications and image associated most positively with a sponsor in order to gain optimal value from each event and combine physical attributes and intangible value creation from positively emotionally connected event sponsorships to enhance experiential marketing efforts tailored to consumer's in multifold approaches that reach men and women most compatible with a brand (Mazodier and Merunka, 2011). This can lead to customer acquisition over a lifetime span that integrates brand value with the self-congruity of a consumer, matching the marketing goals for a brand and retaining loyal brand retention through specifically targeted customers (Olson, 2010).

Marketers can increase the value of the fulfillment and deliverables for retail event sponsorships at shopping malls from the findings determined in this study, gender variances in self-congruity toward retail event sponsors and the shopping mall (environment), as well as previous findings linking gender differences in the influence of women's self-congruity by mall employees and product quality with regards to mall loyalty, and men perceived mall loyalty to price perception (Salem et al., 2016). These implications can further the sponsorship assets associated with the sponsoring retailer and

the shopping mall to garner possible increased brand loyalty and heighten self-congruity to gender in order to develop a better targeted psychographic of the market.

LIMITATIONS

Many limitations are present in the current study. While the sponsored fashion show was a positive asset to the retailer, it is important to consider that the results may not be generalizable as they focus only on the fashion industry with one sole sponsor. It can also be noted that in order to further understand the implications of the self-congruity theory more diversity is needed within the sample to gain a broader scope of the market. Another limitation of the study is gender distribution, as the number of women participants was far greater than men participants in the study. The sample also displayed a higher-end shopping mall featuring a possible need for more locations to warrant merit. In terms of motives, this study did not examine fashion self-congruity (FSC) (Anand and Kaur, 2018). This study also did not consider non-binary gender as a dependent variable.

DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future studies should examine the role of gender as an indicator of heightened self-congruity at sponsored events in genres not examined at this event such as music events, cultural events, and higher consumer involvement with the event activations. Future research could also be focused on the replication of such event measurements in various cultures to conclude better understandings of self-congruity at sponsored events across a wider span of genres and lifestyle-congruity with regards to men and women implications towards a similar event. This model could be used to extend the intended research into various avenues to increase the knowledge of event marketing sponsorship and purchase intention with regards to brand attractiveness from the consumer's

perception of self-congruity. Additional research could also prove self-congruity factors with regards to other dependent variables such as age.

With regards to self-congruity, sponsorship, and event marketing research development and understanding, future findings could better help to format distinct ways to optimize consumer experiences and increase potential value for multiple parties involved in curating event content. By continuing to format studies with additional findings and tested variables in order to better understand consumer self-congruity at sponsored event marketing activations, greater consumer insights could be gained for marketers, advertisers, and brands.

Appendix

Interviewer _____ Date/Show Time _____

For each statement, please rate your *agreement*, where

1= Strongly Disagree & 7=Strongly Agree.

1. The fashion show is a primary reason that I am at the mall today.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	G1
2. I would shop at Macy's if it happens to be easily available.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	D3
3. These events are fun.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	M4
4. The image of the fashion show and the image of Macy's are similar.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C1
5. These events are enjoyable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	M4
6. It makes sense that Macy's sponsors the fashion show.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C1
7. I have experienced Macy's store and merchandise.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	M1
8. I regularly use Macy's merchandise.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	M1
9. Due to this show, I'm more likely to <i>consider</i> shopping at Macy's.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	D3
10. I have expertise with, or know a lot about Macy's merchandise.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	M1
11. I would like to shop or keep shopping at Macy's.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	D3
12. Macy's and the fashion show fit well.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C1
13. I consider myself to be committed to Macy's.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	D2
14. These events are entertaining.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	M4
15. Macy's is or would be one of my top choices for this type of clothing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	D2
16. Macy's and the fashion show stand for similar things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C1
17. I wouldn't seek a competitor if Macy's was available.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	D2
18. I wish there were more promotions like this.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	D4
19. There is a logical connection between the fashion show and Macy's.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C1
20. I like this type of promotion (fashion show events) a lot.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	D4
21. With this type of promotion, I feel like buying the product.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	D4
22. I shop because buying things makes me happy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	M5
23. It makes sense that the fashion show is in this mall.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C2
24. Shopping is fun.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	M5
25. I can identify with the typical customer who shops at this mall.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C4

26. I do not have anything in common with the typical customer who shops at this mall. ®	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C4
27. I am very much like the typical customer who shops at Macy's.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C5
28. I am not at all like any of the typical customers who shop at this mall. ®	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C4
29. The image of the typical customer who shops at this mall is very dissimilar from the kind of person I am. ®	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C4
30. I get a real "high" from shopping.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	M5
31. I feel my personal profile is similar to the typical customer who shops at this mall.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C4
32. I am very much like the typical customer who shops at this mall.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C4
33. I can identify with the typical attendee of this fashion show.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C6
34. I am not at all like any of the typical customers who shop at Macy's. ®	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C5
35. The image of the typical customer who shops at Macy's is very dissimilar from the kind of person I am. ®	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C5
36. The amount of time pressure I feel on this shopping trip could be described as very high. ®	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	M6
37. I feel my personal profile is similar to the typical customer who shops at Macy's.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C5
38. I do not have anything in common with the typical customer who shops at Macy's. ®	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C5
39. I am not at all like any of the typical attendees of this fashion show. ®	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C6
40. Macy's and the Mall fit well.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C3
41. I feel my personal profile is similar to the typical attendee of this fashion show.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C6
42. I do not have anything in common with the typical attendee of this fashion show. ®	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C6
43. Macy's gives me a feeling of trust.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	M2
44. The fashion show and the Mall stand for similar things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C2
45. Macy's gives me a trustworthy impression.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	M2
46. I can identify with the typical customer who shops at Macy's.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C5
47. I have limited time available to me for this particular shopping trip. ®	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	M6
48. The image of the typical attendee of this fashion show is very dissimilar from the kind of person I am. ®	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C6
49. I am not rushed for time on this shopping trip.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	M6
50. I am very much like the typical attendee of this fashion show.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C6
51. There is a logical connection between the Mall and Macy's.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	C3

52. The image of the Mall and the image of Macy's are similar. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 C3
53. I have trust in Macy's. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 M2
54. Macy's and the Mall stand for similar things. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 C3
55. It makes sense that Macy's is a department store in this mall. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 C2
56. There is a logical connection between the Mall and the fashion show. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 C2
57. How much did the fashion show cause you to want to shop more at Macy's? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 D1
58. The image of the Mall and the image of the fashion show are similar. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 C2
59. Did the fashion show cause you to think more positively about Macy's? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 D1
60. The fashion show and the Mall fit well. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 C2
61. Was the fashion show a good way to highlight Macy's? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 D1
1. What is your country of origin? _____
 2. (IF USA) What is your zip code? _____
 3. What year were you born? _____
 4. What is your approximate yearly household income? \$ _____
 5. How many years of formal education do you have? _____
 6. What is your occupation? _____
 7. Gender ☐ Male ☐ Female

Thank you for your opinions! We expect they will help make the fashion shows continue to entertain you.

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